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A Couple Works to Heal and Rebuild



A couple occupies the corner of a room in the emergency department at Zanoel Adidin Hospital in Banda Aceh, the provincial capital of Indonesia's Aceh Province. The young woman on the cot is hooked up to an intravenous drip, and her husband sits on the floor. They speak to each other tenderly as they eat lunch.

Nearly four weeks after the 9.0-magnitude earthquake triggered a massive tsunami along the coast of northern Sumatra, Suryani is still recovering from her injuries. Not as apparent as the bruises is Suryani's emotional pain and loss. She was with her two-and-a-half year-old child at home in her village in Aceh Jaya District on the day of the tsunami. She felt the tremor, then a powerful sound almost 50 minutes later. When she went outside to see what was happening, Suryani was engulfed by the wave, battered by debris and hit in the chest by a log. Swallowing large quantities of mud and seawater, Suryani thought she was going to die.

Somehow, she survived. But her baby and nine other family members were lost. Suryani's husband, Samsulmasli, who was working his stall at the local market that day, managed to escape uninjured, but the

tsunami destroyed his business—along with the market and the entire village. Since reuniting, Samsulmasli hasn't left Suryani's side, even when she was sent to Banda Aceh for further medical care for persistent and increasingly serious respiratory problems.

Suryani is now cared for by a host of international and Indonesian staff coordinated chiefly by a team of physicians from the International Medical Corps, brought in by USAID to provide emergency medical services in Aceh. Suryani said that the doctors immediately gave her medicine to ease the pain and help her breathe. She says that without the emergency team at the Zanoel Adidin Hospital, she would not have known where to go and says the American doctors are kind and attentive. Despite having lived through such trauma and devastation, Suryani and Samsulmasli remain determined to return to their village and rebuild their lives.

Suryani, with her husband Samsulmasli, said that she would not have known where to go for help without the direction of the USAID-sponsored emergency team at Zanoel Adidin Hospital.